

Testimony of
The Honorable John Marshall
Virginia's Secretary of Public Safety
Before The
House Committee on Government Reform
(Field Hearings)
Old Dominion University, Norfolk, Virginia
Chesapeake, Virginia
October 10, 2003

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, members of the Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to appear today. I am John Marshall and I serve in the Cabinet of Governor Mark Warner as Virginia's Secretary of Public Safety. I work in close collaboration with our Office of Commonwealth Preparedness and maintain oversight of 11 public safety agencies, including the State Police, National Guard and Emergency Management. Our Virginia Department of Emergency Management (VDEM) continues to coordinate overall statewide response and recovery activities related to Hurricane Isabel between federal, state and local authorities as well as citizens.

The impact of Hurricane Isabel continues to be felt across the Commonwealth. Individuals and communities are confronted with the monumental task of cleaning up debris and repairing and rebuilding homes, businesses and public facilities. More than 6.6 million pounds of ice and 1.4 million gallons of water have been distributed by state and federal agencies and that is on top of resources secured directly by localities. There remains a long process to restore a sense of normalcy to affected individuals and communities.

Hurricane Isabel entered Virginia September 18 after making landfall along the North Carolina Outer Banks. The Commonwealth experienced sustained winds near 100 mph and tropical storm force winds for 29 hours. The hurricane produced storm surge of 5 to 8 feet along the coast and in the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries. Rainfall totals ranged between 2 and 11 inches along its track. Damages due to wind, rain, and storm surge resulted in flooding, electrical outages, debris, damaged homes and businesses, and interruption of transportation and other routine daily activities.

At the height of the incident approximately 18,618 residents were housed in 158 shelters. Local officials report that more than 32,000 Virginians were evacuated from their homes, and curfews were imposed in many jurisdictions. Ninety-nine of the Commonwealth's 134 cities and counties declared local emergencies. Tragically, 28 people died in the Commonwealth as a result of Hurricane Isabel, with the majority of deaths occurring in the days after the storm had cleared the state.

Further damages occurred when a series of thunderstorms and tornados came through parts of the already impacted areas on September 23.

Hurricane Isabel's assault on Virginia has left an indelible mark on the landscape and in the minds of our citizens. Governor Warner and his administration remain focused and committed to ensuring that all that can be done is being done to address the needs of our citizens in the aftermath of this event. However, you can be assured that a complete assessment of both our readiness and performance at the local, state and federal levels as well as within the private sector will be conducted in the very near future.

Governor Warner took a proactive approach to the impending hurricane by declaring a State of Emergency in the Commonwealth on September 15, 2003, three days prior to the expected arrival of the storm. The State Emergency Operations Center was augmented beginning on September 16, 2003 by representatives from critical state agencies as well as the American Red Cross, FEMA liaisons and others.

In addition, on September 17, over 24 hours in advance of the storm, the Governor authorized mandatory evacuation of designated coastal jurisdictions in low-lying areas. These actions may have saved hundreds of lives.

The Governor held the first of four conference calls with local officials on September 15, and made subsequent calls on September 17, September 18 and September 22, 2003. Also, VDEM conducted two conference calls per day, from September 15 through September 29, 2003, with local emergency management coordinators. During that same time period VDEM held daily conference calls with state agencies involved with our preparation, response and recovery efforts.

Governor Warner requested an Expedited Major Presidential Disaster Declaration (FEMA-1491-DR-VA) that was granted to Virginia on September 18, 2003. (See Attachment 1 for disaster assistance designations). Local officials report that more than 8,000 homes and nearly 300 businesses suffered major damage or were destroyed, coupled with an estimated \$31 million in agricultural damage. Assessment efforts continue.

As a result of the Governor's State of Emergency Declaration, the following types of actions were taken at the state level in advance of the arrival of the storm:

- The Virginia National Guard mobilized 175 soldiers and airmen for State Active Duty. Guardsmen were pre-positioned in Petersburg, Norfolk, Fort Pickett and on the Eastern Shore. In addition, specialized equipment, to include bulldozers, and other heavy equipment were staged at several locations.
- The Virginia Department of Transportation activated its Hurricane Readiness Plan, which resulted in 4,000 VDOT personnel being in full ready status. In addition, VDOT coordinated with Dominion Power, Verizon and other utility companies in order to most effectively work together when clearing roads with power and utility line debris.

- The Virginia State Police deployed 75 Troopers, 5 Sergeants and 4 Dispatchers to the Tidewater area. Of this total, 15 Troopers, 1 Sergeant and 2 Dispatchers were staged on the Eastern Shore. In addition, one Mobile Command Post was staged on the Eastern Shore, and a second was positioned in Franklin County.
- The Department of Forestry pre-positioned chainsaw/Hummer crews in the Eastern Shore and Hampton Roads area.

At the Federal level, approximately 150 members of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Emergency Response Team – Advanced Element arrived in Richmond on September 17, 2003 and they were operational the following day. Our VDEM personnel continue to work in partnership with FEMA to address the needs of our citizens in the aftermath of the hurricane.

While it is too early to provide an accurate assessment of our performance at the state and federal level, we must keep in mind the challenges posed by weather-related events. With hurricanes and other severe weather there is the unpredictability of what will actually occur in relation to a forecast, and what problems will actually be generated as a result of the storm. In that regard, we can say that, while for the most part local, state and federal agencies, along with the utility companies were prepared, what we ended up with was a storm of wider breadth and greater magnitude than perhaps anyone anticipated. In light of the widespread power disruption that effected drinking water systems and perishable food supplies, we must continue to assess our critical infrastructures. Examining our water, power, telecommunications, and transportation networks, and their interdependency on other systems, is critical to understanding our vulnerabilities. In this case it was Mother Nature who provided the impetus. We recognize in the post September 11th environment that it could have been terrorists.

As can be expected in an operation of the scope and magnitude of the one we are dealing with, it is reasonable to assume that we will identify shortcomings with our preparedness, response and recovery actions. You can be assured that at the state level we will work tirelessly to close any such gaps. Sustaining focus, commitment and funding is the key to better preparedness for future events. We need not react and reorganize. Rather we must rededicate our commitment to continuing enhancements to our Commonwealth preparedness efforts.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear today and I am happy to answer questions.

Attachment 1 – Designated Counties Table

Declaration Date: 09/18/2003				Incident Period: 09/18/2003 & Continuing					
NUMBER OF COUNTIES, INDEPENDENT CITIES & TRIBAL AREAS DESIGNATED									
Indiv. Assist	99	Pub Assist	99	Tribal Nations			0		
DECLARATION INFORMATION									
Jurisdiction	AFFECTED Not FEMA Designated	Declaration Dates							
		IA	Public Assistance						
			A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Accomack		09/18	09/18	09/18					
Albemarle		09/22	09/22	09/22					
Amelia		09/22	09/22	09/22					
Amherst		09/22	09/22	09/22					
Appomattox		09/22	09/22	09/22					
Arlington		09/20	09/20	09/20					
Augusta		09/20	09/20	09/20					
Bedford		09/22	09/22	09/22					
Brunswick		09/20	09/20	09/20					
Buckingham		09/22	09/22	09/22					
Campbell		09/22	09/22	09/22					
Caroline		09/20	09/20	09/20					
Charlotte		09/22	09/22	09/22					
Chesterfield		09/20	09/20	09/20					
Charles City		09/18	09/18	09/18	9/24	9/24	9/24	9/24	9/24
Clarke		09/22	09/22	09/22					
Culpeper		09/22	09/22	09/22					
Cumberland		09/22	09/22	09/22					
Dinwiddie		09/22	09/22	09/22					
Essex		09/20	09/20	09/20					
Fairfax		09/20	09/20	09/20					
Fauquier		09/22	09/22	09/22					
Fluvanna		09/20	09/20	09/20					
Frederick		09/22	09/22	09/22					
Gloucester		09/18	09/18	09/18	9/24	9/24	9/24	9/24	9/24
Goochland		09/20	09/20	09/20					
Greene		09/22	09/22	09/22					
Greensville		09/18	09/18	09/18					
Halifax		09/22	09/22	09/22					
Hanover		09/22	09/22	09/22					
Henrico		09/20	09/20	09/20					
Isle of Wight		09/18	09/18	09/18					
James City		09/18	09/18	09/18					
King and Queen		09/22	09/22	09/22					
King George		09/22	09/22	09/22					
King William		09/22	09/22	09/22					
Lancaster		09/18	09/18	09/18	9/24	9/24	9/24	9/24	9/24
Louisa		09/22	09/22	09/22					
Loudoun		09/22	09/22	09/22					
Lunenburg		09/22	09/22	09/22					
Madison		09/22	09/22	09/22					
Mathews		09/18	09/18	09/18	9/24	9/24	9/24	9/24	9/24
Mecklenburg		09/20	09/20	09/20					
Middlesex		09/18	09/18	09/18	9/24	9/24	9/24	9/24	9/24

Nelson		09/22	09/22	09/22					
New Kent		09/22	09/22	09/22					
Northampton		09/18	09/18	09/18					
Northumberland		09/18	09/18	09/18	9/24	9/24	9/24	9/24	9/24
Nottoway		09/22	09/22	09/22					
Orange		09/20	09/20	09/20					
Page		09/20	09/20	09/20					
Pittsylvania		09/22	09/22	09/22					
Powhatan		09/22	09/22	09/22					
Prince Edward		09/22	09/22	09/22					
Prince George		09/18	09/18	09/18	9/24	9/24	9/24	9/24	9/24
Prince William		09/20	09/20	09/20					
Rappahannock		09/22	09/22	09/22					
Richmond		09/18	09/18	09/18	9/24	9/24	9/24	9/24	9/24
Rockbridge		09/20	09/20	09/20					
Rockingham		09/22	09/22	09/22					
Shenandoah		09/22	09/22	09/22					
Southampton		09/18	09/18	09/18					
Spotsylvania		09/20	09/20	09/20					
Stafford		09/20	09/20	09/20					
Surry		09/18	09/18	09/18					
Sussex		09/18	09/18	09/18					
Warren		09/22	09/22	09/22					
Westmoreland		09/18	09/18	09/18	9/24	9/24	9/24	9/24	9/24
York		09/18	09/18	09/18					
Alexandria – Independent City		09/18	09/18	09/18					
Bedford – Independent City		09/22	09/22	09/22					
Buena Vista – Independent City		09/22	09/22	09/22					
Charlottesville – Independent City		09/22	09/22	09/22					
Chesapeake – Independent City		09/18	09/18	09/18					
Colonial Heights – Independent City		09/20	09/20	09/20					
Danville – Independent City		09/20	09/20	09/20					
Emporia – independent City		09/18	09/18	09/18					
Fairfax – Independent City		09/20	09/20	09/20					
Falls Church – Independent City		09/20	09/20	09/20					
Franklin – Independent City		09/18	09/18	09/18					
Fredericksburg – Independent City		09/22	09/22	09/22					
Hampton – Independent City		09/18	09/18	09/18					
Harrisonburg – Independent City		09/22	09/22	09/22					
Hopewell – Independent City		09/18	09/18	09/18	9/24	9/24	9/24	9/24	9/24
Lynchburg – Independent City		09/22	09/22	09/22					
Manassas – Independent City		09/22	09/22	09/22					
Manassas Park – Independent City		09/22	09/22	09/22					
Newport News – Independent City		09/18	09/18	09/18					
Norfolk – Independent City		9/18	9/18	9/18	9/24	9/24	9/24	9/24	9/24
Petersburg – Independent City		9/20	9/20	9/20					
Poquoson – Independent City		9/18	9/18	9/18					
Portsmouth – Independent City		9/18	9/18	9/18					
Richmond – independent City		9/20	9/20	9/20					
Staunton – Independent City		9/20	9/20	9/20					
Suffolk – Independent City		9/18	9/18	9/18					
Virginia Beach – Independent City		9/18	9/18	9/18	9/24	9/24	9/24	9/24	9/24
Waynesboro – Independent City		9/20	9/20	9/20					
Williamsburg – Independent City		9/18	9/18	9/18					
Winchester – Independent City		09/22	09/22	09/22					

CATEGORY KEY

- A: Debris removal
- B: Emergency protective measures
- C: Road systems and bridges
- D: Water control facilities
- E: Public buildings and contents
- F: Public utilities
- G: Parks, recreational and other